



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
November 11-15, 2013***

GLADUE COURT: Sentencing guidelines prompted by large proportion of First Nations' members in the justice system: Man gets probation for beating drug dealer

[The London Free Press](#)

Sunday, November 10, 2013 5:38:48 EST PM

Jane Sims



Scales of Justice

Brandon Nichols looked at the judge in shock.

It was as if he was expecting Superior Court Justice Kelly Gorman would be packing him off to jail, a place he knew well and a life he's trying to put behind him.

Instead of jail, Gorman decided Nichols could go home.

Tears were in Nichols' eyes. His wife sat in the

front row and quietly sobbed with relief.

Nichols, 33, is a First Nations man with, as Gorman pointed out, "an extensive and unenviable criminal record."

But he's also trying to be a good partner, father and member of his community. He's a poster child of what the Gladue sentencing principles — guidelines to address the disproportionate number of First Nations people incarcerated — aim to accomplish.

Nichols was convicted, along with Thomas Harmsworth, 55, of beating up Bradley Driver, a slight, skinny drug dealer, so badly that he lost consciousness, fractured his orbital bone and needed surgery on Dec. 1, 2012.

"The assault perpetrated on Mr. Driver was unprovoked, and completely out of proportion to the perceived threat it was meant to address," Gorman said.

That had to be balanced with Nichols' own tragic background.

Conflict between his parents and alcoholism were factors in his parents' relationship breaking up when he was four.

Nichols began drinking alcohol when he was eight and was a regular drinker at 13. He also experimented with drugs.

He left his mother and moved in with his father when he was 12. He cut off all ties with both parents after he was beaten by his father. There was sexual, physical and emotional abuse when he was a child. He was on his own at 13 and later became addicted to painkillers.

When he was 24, he was sentenced to a federal-prison term. While behind bars, he was introduced to his First Nations roots. He went to a residential-treatment program at a healing lodge in Quebec before returning to the Forest City.

And he relapsed.

A month after the assault, he was in a methadone-treatment program. He got married last summer to his longtime girlfriend and he's "a good father" to their children and trying to teach them about aboriginal culture.

He has also completed high school and studied to be a community-service worker.

Nichols told a counsellor he's ashamed of the life he led and how he spent time "running away from my responsibilities. Now I run toward them."

That commitment to change his life made Nichols "an exceptional case," Gorman said.

Gorman sentenced Nichols to three years' probation, with strict terms to continue counselling and not associate with Driver, Harmsworth and other people who were with him the night Driver was beaten.

NWAC petition for a National Public Inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women extended

[National Union of Public and General Employees](#)

November 12, 2013

A National Public Inquiry would increase public awareness of this human rights crisis in Canada.



Ottawa (12 Nov. 2013) – The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is once again encouraging its members and all Canadians to sign a petition calling on the federal government to hold a National Inquiry to investigate the tragedy of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Launched by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) a year ago, the petition has garnered more than 10,000 signatures.

NWAC has documented over 582 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Most of the cases are from the last 10 years but there are likely many older cases that have not been documented. And each and every month this epidemic of violence continues to claim more Aboriginal women and girls' lives. NWAC believes that a National Inquiry is a crucial step in implementing a comprehensive and coordinated National Action Plan to address the scale and severity of violence faced by Aboriginal women and girls.

Michèle Audette, president of NWAC, states, "Our hearts are full as we remember our mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties, grandmothers and friends who have been lost to violence. We call on the Federal Government to support families and communities, Aboriginal leadership, allies and the Premiers who have voiced the need for a National Public Inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls."

A National Public Inquiry would increase public awareness of this human rights crisis in Canada and provide assurance to Aboriginal peoples that all levels of government recognize the severity of the issue and are committed to ending these cycles of violence.

The need for a National Inquiry into the issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada was reinforced by the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, during his tour of Canada in October. Anaya stated, "I concur that a comprehensive and nationwide inquiry into the issue

could help ensure a coordinated response and the opportunity for the loved ones of victims to be heard and would demonstrate a responsiveness to the concerns raised by the families and communities affected by this epidemic.”

NWAC plans to submit the petition to the Federal Government the week of December 6th. Please join us in gathering support for a National Inquiry by downloading a copy of the [petition](#), gathering signatures and submitting the completed forms to the NWAC office by the end of November 2013. The petition can only be signed in person and on paper as there are restrictions as to what type of petitions can be submitted to the Federal Government.

B.C. First Nation rejects province’s aboriginal child-care service provider

[Globe and Mail](#)

Nov. 12 2013, 9:30 AM EST

Wendy Stueck



Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair of the First Nations Health Council, poses for a photograph at the Sto:lo Nation Health Services building in Chilliwack, B.C., on Friday February 1, 2013. (DARRYL DYCK For The Globe and Mail)

A Fraser Valley tribal council plans to drop out of a provincial group set up to deliver services to aboriginal children, citing a recent report by B.C.’s child-

protection watchdog that found dire shortcomings in how the group was operating.

“We are withdrawing our support for the Wellness Council,” Grand Chief Doug Kelly, president of the Sto:lo Tribal Council, said on Monday. “We don’t believe this provincial organization has been able to do the work that we need it to do. It’s long past its expiry date – it’s time for that council to wind down and it’s time for the regions to do the work they need to do.”

Mr. Kelly said he planned to share the council’s decision at the sixth annual Indigenous Child at the Centre Conference, scheduled to be held in Richmond later this week. If other groups join the Sto:lo in voicing a lack of confidence in the council, it could increase pressure on the province to overhaul a system widely seen to be in disarray.

The Sto:lo Tribal Council’s decision follows a blistering report by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth, that concluded the province

has spent \$66-million over the past 12 years on discussions and projects for aboriginal children without helping a single child.

Those projects included the First Nations Child and Family Wellness Council, often referred to simply as the Wellness Council, that was set up in 2009 and was part of a "nation-to-nation" approach that included transferring authority for aboriginal child services from the province to individual First Nation communities.

The problem with that approach, according to Ms. Turpel-Lafond's report, was that there was no comprehensive policy, "just a series of ad hoc contracts."

The Wellness Council was a successor to an earlier, regional approach that also lacked clear goals and measurable outcomes, her report said.

Ms. Turpel-Lafond's report also skewered the province's decision to hand over some child-welfare responsibilities to delegated aboriginal authorities, or DAAs. It said the agencies often operate without enough qualified staff and without being required to provide measurable outcomes, such as how many children are attending school. Of 23 such agencies in the province, only one meets a federal policy that says there must be at least 1,000 children for a service agency to be formed.

Some of those agencies have received funds without having a single file on their caseloads, Ms. Turpel-Lafond says in her report.

Asked whether that raises questions about funds being misspent or misappropriated and whether investigative audits are required, Ms. Turpel-Lafond said the government distributed funds with few or no strings attached.

"The government gave them [delegated agencies] the money without any expectation that a child would receive the service," Ms. Turpel-Lafond said on Monday. "You can't really hold them to account when the government basically gave them money to talk without expecting any actual services to kids."

Provincial minister of social development Stephanie Cadieux has defended the agencies' work, saying it is not always necessary to have a case file to provide services such as family support or early childhood development services.

The ministry says it is also engaged in an "outcome development process" with delegated aboriginal agencies to set benchmarks for measurement.

Chief Kelly says aboriginal child care in B.C. could benefit from the approach used in setting up a First Nations Health Authority. That effort involved First Nations working with agencies that were already providing health services, like regional health authorities, instead of setting up bodies that might overlap or even be in conflict.

"It's bottom up, instead of top down," he said.

Wet'suwet'en Leadership Responds to Report on Aboriginal Children and Youth

[Marketwired](#)

November 12, 2013

SMITHERS, BRITISH COLUMBIA--(Marketwired - Nov. 12, 2013) - The Wet'suwet'en leadership are dismayed by the sweeping, inaccurate statements made by British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, in her report *When Talk Trumped Service: A Decade of Lost Opportunity for Aboriginal Children and Youth in B.C.*

Through our Indigenous Approaches initiative, the Wet'suwet'en are building an alternative to address the tremendous challenges of MCFD to care adequately for Wet'suwet'en children and families. The success of this initiative contradicts Turpel-Lafond's claim that there is "no evidence of a single Aboriginal child or family receiving better services as a result [of provincial funding]."

Since commencing direct service delivery in May 2012, the Indigenous Approaches Initiative has maintained an active caseload of **40-50 families** at any given time. The Initiative involves collective activities on Wet'suwet'en traditional territories, blending cultural education such as language, womb-to-grave, rites of passage, protocols, and territory stewardship with workshops on topics such as healthy communication, conflict resolution, family dynamics, self-care, community safety, and healing circles. **To date, more than 400 Wet'suwet'en** people have participated in the initiative.

We are offended by Turpel-Lafond's outrageous claim that "we can only conclude that the drain of time, energy and resources has resulted in a negative impact on services."

Prior to colonization when Wet'suwet'en laws and practices were outlawed, the Wet'suwet'en successfully cared for their children and families. It is an inherent right of the Wet'suwet'en to reclaim our rightful authorities and the Indigenous Approaches initiative is currently the only effective vehicle that enables the Wet'suwet'en to move forward.

We are very proud of the positive and progressive steps forward that our members are making as a result of this initiative. We have developed a community-driven process to monitor, evaluate and guide our initiative to ensure we maximize positive outcomes for our children, families and communities.

The Wet'suwet'en leadership believes that by reconnecting to their cultural systems of wellness, the Wet'suwet'en will heal from the negative impacts of the past and fully realize their human potential. By utilizing our ancient wisdom, we are creating a contemporary pathway to restore our social and economic wellbeing. Our strengths-based initiative is designed to provide intervention, prevention and support to children and families, programming that is grounded in Wet'suwet'en Anuk Nu'Atden (laws).

One participant's words tell of the success of the Initiative: "I was aware of my family not being involved culturally, we didn't know our language, when it all was just a question away. Before I felt we were just tolerated, I now feel like we are celebrated, reunited, and I now know I am capable of being a sober Wet'suwet'en Woman" (Women's Camp Participant, 2013).

Indigenous Warriors Honored on Remembrance Day and Aboriginal Veterans Day

[Indian Country Today](#)

November 13, 2013



Andy Everson. Andy Everson, K'ómoks First Nation, is an artist on the northwest coast of Canada, in British Columbia. Besides creating much of the artwork for Idle No More posters, he put an indigenous spin on the Remembrance Day icon, the poppy.

Indigenous leaders, artists and the Prime Minister himself invoked aboriginal contributions to the military on November 11, which was Veterans Day in the United States and Remembrance Day in Canada.

On Saturday, November 9, veterans of First Nations, Inuit and Métis descent celebrated Aboriginal Veterans Day to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples who have flocked to military service. Artist Andy Everson, Northwest Coast Artist from K'ómoks First Nation in British Columbia, created a poppy for indigenous veterans to call their own.

"Share far and wide to remember indigenous veterans everywhere!" the artist proclaimed on his [Facebook page](#). And the world has done so, thousands upon thousands of times. Everson is known for, among other works, having created art for numerous Idle No More posters, treaty-related commentary via Star Wars imagery, and other references that tie in Native history with contemporary politics.

First Nations, Inuit and other leaders lay wreaths along with Prime Minister Stephen Harper in a ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa on November 11 honoring those who had served. Regional Chief Bill Erasmus of the Assembly of First Nations, who oversees veterans issues for the AFN, participated in the ceremony.

"As we do each year at this time, we pause and reflect on the sacrifices that every one of our Veterans has made to ensure a safer and better country for all of us," he said in a statement from the AFN. "We shall never forget the memory of all our First Nation Veterans that are no longer with us."

An earlier ceremony was marked by more than 100 people on Monday at the National Aboriginal Veterans Association Monument "to commemorate native aboriginal contributions to Canada's war efforts over the years," the [Ottawa Citizen](#) reported, sharing numerous images of the moving moment in a [slide show](#).

Even the skies were celebrating, as this year Veterans/Remembrance Day coincides with the Taurid meteor shower.

Indigenous fighters were memorialized all over Canada on Saturday November 9, as well.

"Today, we are marking this special day by honoring the First Nations men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice to help defend the freedoms that all people enjoy in this country," said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo in a statement on November 9. "First Nations citizens enlisted in record numbers during those difficult times and to this day continue to help and serve Canada with pride and distinction. All First Nations across Canada proudly support our First Nation Veterans and their families. We remember with the highest respect the remarkable contribution and dedication of all those brave men and women whom we lost in past conflicts."

Aboriginal veterans hold a special place in Canada. It was Shawnee Chief Tecumseh and his followers who were largely responsible for the defeat of the Americans during the War of 1812.

"Canada might not exist and we might all be Americans without the First Nations warriors who fought with the British in the War of 1812," reads a 2011 statement on the website [NationTalk.ca](#). "The tribes of the Iroquois League, the Caughnawagas from near Montreal and the western tribes led by Shawnee chief Tecumseh played a pivotal role in many battles with superior reconnaissance skills, accuracy and fearlessness in combat. They also gave the British a decided psychological advantage. In the two World Wars, First Nations people were exempt from conscription, were not considered "citizens" of Canada and did not have the right to vote."

That service notwithstanding, "4,000 First Nations men volunteered for service in WWI and over 300 died," the statement pointed out, and "20,000 First Nations volunteered for service in WWII and over 200 died. These numbers represent about 30 percent of First Nations men eligible to serve."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, too, acknowledged aboriginal contributions.

"Across the centuries, Canadians have always answered the call to defend their nation," he said. "During the War of 1812, English and French-speaking Canadians joined with First Nations allies and British forces in defending Canada against invasion. This year, November 11 marks the bicentennial of a critical battle of that war, the Battle of Crysler's Farm, where early Canadians from Upper and Lower Canada, as well as First Nations allies, fought with courage and determination to defend their homes and communities."

B.C. spends \$500m each year on child protection: Agencies defensive in face of youth advocate's critical report

[Vancouver Sun](#)

November 13, 2013

Lori Culbert

More than half-a-billion dollars is spent each year in B.C. on child protection services - an important system that was harshly criticized last week by the province's youth advocate.

The provincial budget earmarked \$500 million for the 2012/13 year - and for the next two fiscal years - to pay for child-welfare costs such as social workers, foster parents and supporting troubled youth to live independently.

The federal government also gave an estimated \$57 million in 2012/13 to Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs) for child welfare in B.C., according to the report by children and youth representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

Those 23 DAAs, which mainly operate on reserves, also get \$90 million from the provincial government, roughly one-fifth of B.C.'s overall child-welfare budget.

And yet, 13 of those DAAs - more than half - do not have the authority to do full child protection services, so Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) social workers are still being paid to work on files on those reserves.

In an interview Tuesday, MCFD deputy minister Mark Sieben said some of those agencies are content to deliver voluntary support services to families and a few others have the increased authority to oversee guardianship services.

Only 10 of the DAAs provide full child protection services right now.

Turpel-Lafond's report admonished the province for wasting an additional \$66 million over 12 years on planning a new protection system for aboriginal children without spending a dime of that money on helping families.

While one plan - creating regional aboriginal authorities - was shelved, another plan called Indigenous Approaches, which aims to transfer childwelfare authority to First Nations communities, is still slowly moving forward.

In the meantime, Sieben defended MCFD's \$90-million price tag for these DAAs, arguing the provincial money is spent on helping children and mainly focuses on preventing kids from going into care in the first place. The federal government's \$57-million contribution is for the care of children after they have been apprehended, he said.

"On the federal side, they do not pay for prevention and family support style services," Sieben said. "They pay money for when a child comes into care. And that is, in B.C.'s view, a crude measure and approach to child welfare practice."

Sieben allowed that Turpel-Lafond's report left the ministry with some things to consider, such as offering to help the DAAs increase their level of child protection services and/or assist them to better recruit and train staff.

Turpel-Lafond's report found some DAAs were "fraught with staff turnover and ongoing struggles to find qualified staff."

She also said the DAAs were "mostly ignored and sometimes undermined" by the province as they "struggled" to provide services.

Sieben said the province has had the "best intentions" to revamp aboriginal child welfare in the province and has engaged over the years with First Nations to try to get fewer kids in care.

This is crucial in B.C. where, as of March 2013, more than half - or about 4,450 out of 8,106 children in care - were aboriginal, according to Turpel-Lafond's report, *When Talk Trumps Service*.

The DAAs represent almost 47 per cent of aboriginal children in care, noted the report. Fully one-third of the province's \$90 million output for DAAs is spent on one Vancouver agency, which gets \$30 million annually and is handling more than 900 child welfare files this year.

The Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society (NIFCS), on the other hand, received \$1.5 million in provincial funding and had just 34 open children-incare files.

NIFCS board president Patricia Starr said her DAA, which is located in Terrace and serves nine Northern B.C. reserves, shouldn't be criticized for carrying a small number of files as that is a sign it is doing its job well.

In other words, it is doing prevention work to keep kids in family homes, rather than provide services after there is a crisis and they have been apprehended.

"NIFCS places social workers in the communities and they can work more closely to identify families at risk," Starr said. Her DAA does not have full child protection authority, so when a child apprehension takes place its staff accompanies an MCFD social worker to the home.

NIFCS has applied to get full child protection designation, and Starr said the delay has mainly been around finances. She believes more money is needed for prevention services.

It has also been a challenge to find and retain staff, but Starr said that is a challenge in the north and is confident it can be addressed.

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun

Sto:lo pull support from organization named in Turpel-Lafond report

[Global News](#)

November 13, 2013

Justin McElroy



The Sto:lo Tribal Council has pulled their support from an organization named in a scathing report on the Ministry of Children and Family Development's [problems in helping Aboriginal children](#).

Doug Kelly, president of the council, says they're pulling out of the First Nations Child and Wellness Council because the money isn't being used effectively.

"We do not want to be caught up in the blame game, we want to take responsibility for our children," he said on *Unfiltered* to Jill Krop. "Much of our leadership is prepared to support [Turpel-Lafond's] recommendations...we'll work with governments and decision-makers and begin to resolve this public policy fiasco."

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, claims that the Ministry wasted 66 million dollars over the last 12 years on meetings and talks, with very little of the cash going to the children in need.

"The 66 million had no policy aim," she said. "It was really just sending money out of the ministry for people to talk and not serve children."

The BC Assembly of First Nations is holding a special Chief's Assembly later this month, where the report will be discussed. Kelly believes that action is coming one way or another.

"Chiefs love their children, they love their families, they love their citizens. This report is calling upon chiefs to get it done, do it right, and get on it now."

Christopher Alcantara: Let aboriginals own their land

[National Post](#)

November 12, 2013

Christopher Alcantara



Ian Lindsay/Vancouver Sun A B.C. band has made it possible for its members to buy and sell their own properties. Other bands should follow suit.

The Nisga'a in B.C. have long been trailblazers and pioneers. During the 1970s, it was their activism on the land and in the courts that led to the legal recognition of aboriginal title in Canada. In 1998, they were the first aboriginal group in B.C. to complete a comprehensive land claims agreement. Last

week, they again made history by creating the first individually-held fee simple interests on aboriginal lands. As a result, the Nisga'a citizens who receive these fee simple interests will have the same type of property rights that Canadians have off-reserve. That means they can sell or lease their land or bequeath it in a will to whomever they wish. They can also use their land to secure a loan or mortgage to build a house or start a business, thus generating much needed economic development and capital for their communities.

This month, in a remote corner of northern B.C., just a few kilometres from the Alaskan border, three modest houses entered Canadian First Nations history.

The residences, all located on the self-governed lands of the Nisga'a Nation, are the first privately owned homes on Canadian native land. They can be mortgaged, they

can be transferred without the approval of either Ottawa or local administrators and they can even be sold to a non-aboriginal.

As Dorothy Elliott, the Nisga'a deputy registrar of land titles, summed up to the Vancouver Sun this week, the Nisga'a can now own their homes "just like they would in the rest of Canada."

Some critics argue that fee simple property rights should be opposed because it could lead to the erosion of a community's land base. But the Nisga'a initiative has several safeguards built into it. For one, the underlying title to the land still belongs to the Nisga'a community. That means, even if a non-band member buys and lives on the land, the land continues to be subject to Nisga'a laws and jurisdiction. If the new owner dies without any legal heirs, the land reverts back to the Nisga'a. The lands are also subject to the Nisga'a government's expropriation laws, much like our lands off-reserve are subject to Canadian expropriation laws. In short, the Nisga'a regime is similar to what exists off-reserve: if an American buys a plot of land in Toronto, the underlying title to that land remains with the Crown. The territorial integrity of Canada is not threatened.

So why would any group want fee simple ownership rights? There are three main benefits. The first is to facilitate access to credit. The on-reserve legal regime makes it extremely difficult, though not impossible, for an individual to acquire a loan or mortgage to build a house or start a business. The security and flexibility of fee simple ownership solves this problem because in the event of a default, the lending institution can take possession of the land and sell it to reap its lost funds.

Second, fee simple property rights are more attractive to investors. The ambiguous nature of the property rights that currently exist under the Indian Act creates a difficult environment to pursue investment. Fee simple property rights provide a level of certainty that is attractive to investors.

Third, fee simple rights reduce what economists call "transaction costs." Under the Indian Act, existing property rights are subject to significant red tape. Every transaction requires the approval of the band council and/or the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, which can significantly delay the use or transaction of a piece of reserve land. In one case, it took approximately 9 years to subdivide and transfer a piece of land in southern Ontario, simply because of the red tape involved with securing the consent of the band council and minister.

The benefits of fee simple ownership are substantial and have attracted the attention of First Nations across the country. As we speak, Manny Jules, a prominent aboriginal leader from B.C., is working with the federal government to draft legislation that would allow other First Nations to adopt a similar system without having to complete a modern treaty.

Of course, not all indigenous communities are interested in this proposal. Fee simple ownership only makes sense for those communities located next to urban centres and where demand for reserve land is extremely high.

Still, indigenous and non-indigenous leaders should respect the principle of aboriginal sovereignty by not getting in the way of those communities that want to choose the path of individual private ownership.

Christopher Alcantara is associate professor in the department of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University. His latest book, Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada, was published earlier this year by University of Toronto Press.

Treaty 8 First Nations show support for Elsipogtog First Nations

[Tumbler Ridge News](#)

November 13, 2013

For the last month, the Elsipogtog First Nation located in New Brunswick have been protesting against SWN Resources Canada's shale gas exploration from carrying out exploration on their traditional land. This has already erupted in a violent clash with RCMP.

The issue is not that the First Nations do not support resource development; the problem is they weren't consulted about work being done on their land.

The protest has already resulted in a violent clash when the RCMP moved in to enforce a court injunction against the protesters' blockade. SWN attempted to extend the injunction to stop the protest, however Justice George Rideout ruled there were no grounds to extend the injunction, after hearing arguments in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Shortly thereafter, the BC Treaty 8 Council of Chiefs stated their support for the Elsipogtog First Nation's right to protect lands and water. A release from the Council states, "The BC Treaty 8 Council of Chiefs are stating their support for the Elsipogtog First Nation's right to protect lands and water that are at risk due to fracking and shale gas development within their traditional territory that has been undertaken without negotiation or consent from the First Nation."

Treaty 8 Tribal Chief Liz Logan says, "We are deeply saddened by the escalation to violence in the past weeks resulting from the Elsipogtog community not being allowed to voice their concerns against destructive resource extraction in their territory. We are urging a more peaceful approach and strongly suggest that companies and our government respect the Elsipogtog by stopping this disrespectful disregard for the immediate and long term impacts of gas development."

West Moberly First Nations (WMFN) Chief Roland Willson states, "It is an embarrassment that we have to force our elected officials to realize that money does not take precedent over the livelihood of human beings. First Nations cannot continue to let money hungry governments open the door to industry development at all costs. There is an obligation of the Crown to work with First Nations to find a balance between economic development and protecting our lands and resources for future generations."

WMFN recently won a court battle to protect the Burnt Pine Caribou Herd from the construction of a mine, which was planned to be created in their core habitat.

The release goes on to state, "The Treaty 8 First Nations know well the approach of resource development companies and governments when it comes to traditional territories as northern communities have been inundated with mining, oil and gas and now LNG projects dating back nearly 60 years. "

Treaty 8 First Nations support resource development done in cooperation with Aboriginal peoples that takes into consideration both short and long-term impacts to social, economic and environmental aspects in both traditional communities as well as the greater northern region. Logan adds, "We hope that the Elsipogtog communities' experience does not set the tone for future interactions between companies and First Nations. We are calling on our government to see the unfortunate consequences of turning a blind eye to reckless resource development."

First Nations kept in the dark over massive slurry spill into Athabasca River

[Edmonton Journal](#)

November 12, 2013

Marty Klinkenberg

EDMONTON - One of two First Nations downstream of Sherritt International's Obed Mountain coal mine is complaining it has been kept in the dark about the company's massive leak into the Athabasca River.

Alexis Nakota First Nation Chief Tony Alexis said Tuesday that he has voiced strong concerns with the company and Alberta government because the band has been excluded from conversations related to the implementation of an emergency response plan in the wake of what is thought to be the largest coal slurry spill in Canadian history.

"As stewards of the land and water, it is our obligation and right to be the caretakers and protector of the Athabasca River," Chief Alexis said.

"We must be consulted to ensure that our environment and people are adequately protected and that this does not happen again."

On Oct. 31, one billion litres of coal particles, clay, mud, shale and other materials leaked from a containment pond and flowed through trout streams before reaching the Athabasca River.

Now just past the town of Athabasca, the leak is being carried by the current and stretches more than 100 kilometres along the river.

The provincial government announced last week that it warned communities downstream not to draw water from the river but at least one — the Alexander First Nation — says it has never been contacted.

"The next time we hear from the province will be the first," said Diamond Arcand, a member of the band's Industrial Relations Corporation. "They said they have been keeping us informed, but the only information we are receiving is through the media.

"To me, it's very scary and kind of sad."

© Copyright (c) The Edmonton Journal

First Nation children heavily contaminated with banned chemicals: Mothers also exposed to PCBs, pesticides, and heavy metals

Straight.com

November 12, 2013

Brian Bienkowski



*Imperial Oil refinery near Sarnia, Ontario
Shutterstock*

Mothers and children of a First Nations tribe living in one of Canada's most industrialized regions are highly exposed to estrogen-blocking chemicals, according to a new study.

The research is the first to confirm the Aamjiwnaang community's fears of elevated exposure to pollutants, and it

may help shed some light on why the tribe has an unusually low percentage of baby boys.

"While we're far from a conclusive statement, the kinds of health problems they experience—neurodevelopment, skewed sex ratios—are the health effects we would expect from such chemicals and metals," said Niladri Basu, lead author of the study and associate professor at McGill University in Montreal.

The reserve is within 24 kilometres of "Chemical Valley", a region along the U.S.-Canada border near Lake Huron with more than 50 industrial facilities, including oil refineries and chemical manufacturers.

Forty-two pairs of Aamjiwnaang mothers and children were tested for the study. For four types of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the average levels found in the children ranged from two to seven times higher than the average Canadian child. The mothers' average levels were about double the Canadian average for three of the compounds.

PCBs were widely used industrial compounds until they were banned in the 1970s in the United States and Canada because they were building up in the environment.

Eating fish is the most common exposure route for PCBs. But a survey revealed the community eats very little fish, so the high levels of PCBs remain "a puzzle", Basu said. He suspects the chemicals are still in the soil and air from decades ago.

Hormone-disrupting chemicals may alter sex ratios

The Aamjiwnaang First Nation community has about 2,000 members, with about 850 living on the reserve near Sarnia, Ontario, just east of Michigan across the St. Clair River. The name Aamjiwnaang means "at the spawning stream", a nod to the tribe's rich historical relationship with the nearby river and its fish. Fish advisories warning of contamination have been ubiquitous there since the 1970s.

The tribe received international attention in 2005 when scientists reported that baby boys accounted for only 35 percent of its births compared with 51.2 percent nationwide. Those University of Ottawa researchers concluded that the decline may "partly reflect effects of chemical exposures".

The new study reported that the types of PCBs that are elevated in the Aamjiwnaang community are the same types linked to reduced male births in a small study of women in New York.

"I'm struck by the elevated PCB levels," said Nancy Langston, a professor of environmental history at Michigan Technological University who was not involved in the study. "And the fact that all are antiestrogenic."

Some PCBs are antiestrogenic, which means they block the hormone, while others are estrogenic, which means they mimic it.

Hormones are necessary for proper fetal development but it's not understood how, or if, hormone-disrupting chemicals in the environment may alter human sex ratios.

The new study was small and didn't investigate any health problems, so it's important to not jump to any conclusions, said Shanna Swan, a professor and vice chair for research and mentoring at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York.

"Chemicals have been linked to altered sex ratios. But things like stress can alter ratios, too," Swan said.

No one has studied the tribe's sex ratio since the original research, which was based on births from 1999 through 2003. Swan surveyed the community to see if there was interest in a follow-up study. The answer was no.

"There was sensitivity to outsiders coming in and studying them. There's no question there's exposure; it's clearly a polluted place. But this is their ancestral home...what do they get out of you telling them how badly off they are?" said Swan, who specializes in reproductive effects of environmental chemicals.

In addition to PCBs, the mothers and children had elevated levels of cadmium, some perfluorinated chemicals, and the pesticides hexachlorocyclohexane and DDT compared with the Canadian average.

Birth complications, asthma, learning difficulties at high rates

Sharilyn Johnston, environmental coordinator of the tribe's health and environment committee, said the findings were somewhat expected, stoking a fear that already has changed Aamjiwnaang.

"There's a constant odor issue; many people just do not want to be outside," she said. "We used to be able to go into areas to hunt and fish that are now blocked off with fence lines that say: 'No Trespassing'. Centuries of industrial development have impacted traditions and land use."

In addition to the skewed sex ratio, 23 percent of Aamjiwnaang children have learning or behavioral difficulties—a rate about six times higher than children in a neighboring county, according to a 2005 community study.

The asthma rate for children on the reserve is about 2.5 times higher than the rest of the county, according to a 2007 study by Ecojustice, a Canadian environmental organization.

Birth complications also are commonplace. Of 132 women surveyed in the community in 2005, 39 percent had at least one stillbirth or miscarriage. The average for U.S. women is 15 percent, according to the National Institutes of Health.

As oil-sands production ramps up in Canada, there's fear that Aamjiwnaang's problems will worsen, Basu said.

Canada-based Enbridge, an energy transport company, wants to boost and reverse the flow of a pipeline that currently runs from east to west across Canada, in part to send oil-sands petroleum to refineries in Ontario and Quebec, according to a company news release.

Suncor Energy's Sarnia refinery already expanded its capacity to bring in crude from Alberta oil sands in 2007 as part of a \$1 billion upgrade. Oil and gas investment in the oil sands—mostly located in northern Alberta—has increased from \$4.2 billion in 2000 to about \$26.9 billion in 2012, according to the Alberta Energy Department.

Langston said the oil-sands activity would "without a doubt" compound the problems for Aamjiwnaang and other indigenous communities in both Canada and the United States.

Areas experiencing a boom in petrochemical refining are already experiencing health problems. Men in Fort Saskatchewan—downwind of refineries and chemical manufacturers and oil-sands processors—suffer from leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma at higher rates than neighboring communities, according to a new study. Two known carcinogens, butadiene and benzene, were found at higher levels in rural Fort Saskatchewan than in many of the world's most polluted cities, the authors wrote.

Isobel Simpson, lead author of the study and a chemist at the University of California, Irvine, said it is not clear if the oil-sands boom has spread its reach to Sarnia yet. But she and the coauthors have been advocating for a more cautious approach as refining communities increase production.

"Things are really starting to ramp up. Fort Saskatchewan and other communities are frustrated with pollutants and have been trying for years to be heard," Simpson said. "We are pushing for a more prudent approach, one that seeks to reduce known carcinogens and other harmful contaminants."

Johnston said the tribe's focus remains on the more immediate problems.

"We continue to go to the regulators—they're the ones who are allowing these pollutants to be released," she said. "They're the ones who can refine and set standards that reduce pollution among our people."

Basu wants to conduct more research, including a larger sample and examining more health data. But it will take time, money and continued trust from a tribe that has long felt slighted by outsiders. The Ministry of the Environment directed media requests to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, which did not return requests for comment.

"The community has been complaining about health problems and pollution for decades," he said. "We'd like to get to a point where we can look at a certain chemical and say, 'That's causing these health problems.' "

Brian Bienkowski is a staff writer for [Environmental Health News](#), which is a foundation-funded news service that publishes its own enterprise journalism.

Power position: Yukon First Nations benefit from equity in power projects

[Calgary Herald](#)

November 12, 2013



An interior view of Yukon's \$120-million Mayo B hydroelectric project in which Na-cho Nyak Dun First Nation is a major equity partner.

The Yukon government recently announced new regulations overseeing safety and environmental standards for gas processing plants in the territory. More than a routine announcement, the regulations provide a clear framework for Kwanlinn Dun First Nation to build and operate a natural gas conversion plant that will use

liquid natural gas to displace more costly power currently provided by diesel generators.

That project demonstrates why the Yukon is unique in its relationship with the First Nations living within its borders. A 1973 document titled *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, authored jointly by the First Nations, became the template for a more equitable way of sharing northern resources and preserving traditional values in a global economy. The agreement resulting from that document recognized the rights of First Nations to self-government and to participate meaningfully in the resource and energy sector using economic development funds originally derived from treaty settlements.

"The accord demonstrated a better way to work with First Nations," says Stanley Noel, chief executive officer of the Yukon Indian Development Corporation Ltd., a corporation fully owned by 14 Yukon First Nations and three northern British Columbia First Nations. "Under the rules of the Yukon Energy Board, energy projects must be financed with a minimum of 60% equity and big energy and resource projects are becoming larger and more complex. The days of counting on government to finance 100% of every major project are long gone. We're here to offer assistance, incubate development proposals and to help finance those projects too large for any individual First Nation."

Noel says First Nations are significant equity players in eight major Yukon resource projects announced in recent years. One of the most prominent is the \$120-million Mayo B initiative, which involved building a second 10-megawatt powerhouse downstream from an existing one on the Mayo River.

"The Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation is an equity partner here and is enjoying the economic benefits of that partnership," says Noel. "With equity comes leverage. The time for token opportunities like temporary jobs is in the past. What's new and exciting and different is the long-term security and revenue streams that stem from investment in large infrastructure projects."

Among current developments, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are investing in a biomass energy project designed to use trees killed by beetles as biofuel, while the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Carcross Tagish First Nation are considering equity positions in two major hydroelectric projects.

"The Yukon has matured into a market ready to accept investment in large-scale resource and energy projects," says Noel. "When you have a government that encourages participation from all stakeholders and you have Yukon First Nations with significant investment equity to bring to the table, it's clear that we're ready to work with the largest companies who want to operate here."

Round dance to help build community relationships

[Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune](#)

November 13, 2013

Kirsten Goruk



Marge Mueller, co-chair of GPACOS (DHT file photo)

On Saturday residents have the chance to take part in a traditional round dance event hosted by the Grande Prairie Aboriginal Circle of Services (GPACOS).

The event is being held at the gym in Grande Prairie Regional College starting at 5 p.m. with a pipe ceremony, followed by a feast and then the round dance.

"It's all about building relationships with the broader community. What the membership is thinking is that we would use a cultural activity as a means to do that," said Dennis Whitford, senior advisor, Aboriginal Services with Child and Family Services, which in turn

supports GPACOS.

"It's something that comes from the Aboriginal culture and spirituality. The round dance fits that prescription perfectly. It's very much a social event, but at the same time, it's a spiritual and cultural event. It involves the entire family and the entire community is welcome to participate."

Whitford said that organizers expect a number of drummers from around the region to be present. GPACOS is made up of agencies and ministries that provide human services here in Grande Prairie and the area and he hopes that the round dance will engage a sense of understanding in the community.

"What we envision is everyone getting together at this event, that there will be appreciation for this event. Because it does have a lot of strength in terms of creating fellowship and creating togetherness. With that, we'll be able to go forward with good spirit and in the spirit of partnership," Whitford said.

Marge Mueller, co-chair of GPACOS, believes that the round dance is the perfect event for a family to share in. It's also a unique chance to people to experience something new.

"This is such a great opportunity for people to come and experience. Often, people do not always have the opportunity to join in a round dance. It's our first annual community round dance and so we're really encouraging everyone to come out and be a part of this round dance," she said.

Mueller hopes that the round dance will create a connection between everyone in the community, allowing them to strengthen ties and work together going forward.

"Together we will work at having a more positive community, with people have a greater understanding of our culture and we are putting this on in the spirit of the gratitude we have as a community," she said.

"We're inviting people to come out so that we can strengthen those relationships. When we stand together, there's so much more we can achieve and accomplish in society."

Plains Cree language used to name Edmonton LRT bridges

[CBC News](#)

Nov 13, 2013 4:27 PM MT



The LRT bridge that will replace the Cloverdale footbridge is being given a Plains Cree name, Tawatina. (CBC) The city of Edmonton is using Plains Cree words to name two bridges on the southeast LRT extension in honour of the aboriginal community.

The bridge crossing the North Saskatchewan River from downtown to the Muttart Conservatory will be named Tawatina, meaning valley. The bridge across Connors Road will be called Kâhasinîskâk, after a nearby creek.

City officials say the new bridges offered a chance to tie together the city's geography and aboriginal history.

"The naming committee and the administration just saw a great opportunity to honour the aboriginal community by naming the two bridges," city planner Cory Sousa said.

"Especially how they are tied in within the river valley and we feel that's the best way to honour the aboriginal community."

Jeffrey Nachtigal, chairman of the city's naming committee, says finding appropriate places to use aboriginal names has been part of the committee's focus.

"We've been looking for opportunities to honour the aboriginal history which is an important part of who we are and what this city is about," Nachtigall said.

The city's aboriginal relations officer and other advisors helped the city chose the names.

National First Nations Youth Summit heads to Saskatchewan

[Metro News](#)

November 14, 2013

Jacob Morgan



Jacob Morgan/Metro Vice chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Simon Bird, stands at the FSIN office in Saskatoon. His organization has partnered with the Assembly of First Nations to hold a national youth summit in the province next week.

Young aboriginal Canadians will be gathering in Saskatchewan for an event that only happens once every five years.

The fourth National First Nations Youth Summit takes place from Nov. 18 – 21 at the TCU Place in Saskatoon.

Vice chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), Simon Bird, said his organization has partnered up with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to host roughly 1,000 participants between the ages of 16 and 30.

Researcher shines light on aboriginal street gangs

[Prince Albert Daily Herald](#)

November 13, 2013

Matt Gardner



*University of Saskatchewan PhD student and sessional lecturer Robert Henry will appear at Playasol Clothing and Activewear on Saturday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. to discuss and sign copies of his book *Brighter Days Ahead*, which documents the experiences of former indigenous street gang members. Submitted photo*

Childhood for many is a source of nostalgia. For others, it can represent something darker and more painful.

Interviewing ex-members of indigenous street gangs for a research project, University of Saskatchewan PhD student Robert Henry found that a troubled childhood was a common thread in each subject's biography.

"When you're five years old ... and all you see are parties, or your mom getting beat, or your dad beating you, or your brothers getting beat, or you're getting ripped from your families, or you don't even know who your family is, you're looking for anything that kind of gives you a sense of belonging -- and that's what the gang does," Henry said.

"The gang ... creates a larger identity for a person. It gives the person a place in which they can feel that they are a part of something greater than themselves. It gives them a sense of group identity."

Henry's research eventually left to a book, *Brighter Days Ahead*, which combines the former gang members' stories with illustrative photographs.

On Saturday, the author will appear at Playasol Clothing & Activewear from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. to sign copies of the book and answer questions.

Currently a sessional lecturer in the university's Department of Native Studies, Henry -- who is of Métis descent -- first became involved with gang research about 13 years ago after noting a general lack of information on the subject.

After exploring definitional issues of street gangs for his master's degree, in his doctoral program Henry sought to examine how street gangs help men, particularly aboriginal men, form identities and notions of masculinity.

His research illustrates the complicated interplay of factors that propel young people towards the gang life.

"For aboriginal youth, it's complex," Henry said. "What we have to understand is that it's not a one-day decision of 'Oh, I'm going to join a gang today.'

"For a lot of the individuals, they've been normalized to a heightened sense of violence that many of us will never understand just through growing up, and these are all byproducts of policies that have limited and controlled aboriginal peoples."

Taking the example of residential schools, Henry noted that the decline of that notorious institution was followed by an expansion of the child welfare system.

A greater number of aboriginal youth are in care today, he said, than was the case at the height of the residential school system.

Growing up in harsh circumstances, often suffering abuse, many youth attempt to gain respect through violence in the schoolyard. A lack of economic opportunities can further increase the allure of power and respect associated with gang membership.

Henry also pointed to differences in how society views misbehaviour depending on one's ethnicity.

"We start seeing these hypermasculine notions ... yet we seem to attach this to aboriginal youth that they're doing it in deviance, whereas if we see it other youth out on the playgrounds, it's just boys being boys," he said.

"So even in this notion, some kids are allowed to be violent and just work their way through it, while others are labelled as criminals and we treat them as such at very young ages."

Henry argued that the impact of colonization and its associated policies has created a "perfect space" for aboriginal gangs to form in rural and urban communities.

Noting that gangs are not an individual phenomenon but rather a social one, Henry drew a comparison to the situation facing early Irish immigrants in Canada.

"If you look historically on all of this, the first gangs that we saw that we attributed to what we see today are those marginalized Irish youth who were coming across back in the early part of the 19th century, where they were marginalized by the community.

If we actually decrease gangs and gang membership and the violence associated to it, we actually increase the overall health in the entire community. Robert Henry

"They weren't wanted. They were segregated. They were told they weren't allowed to move out of these places and they had to band together in order to economically survive. So they stole together, they survived together, they fought together, they created an identity together."

Many of the gang members Henry interviewed committed their first break-and-enters at five or six years old in order to obtain food for themselves or their siblings.

Violence is a regular feature of gang life. The men interviewed in the book describe suffering "beat-ins" to join a group, being targeted in drive-by shootings or engaging in fights with rival gangs.

While many gang members perceive Regina as a more violent city than Saskatoon, Prince Albert has a reputation for being more violent than both.

Henry again noted the overlapping social issues that create spaces for gangs, which in Prince Albert include names such as Indian Posse, the Terror Squad and the Scorpion Brothers.

"There are street gangs in Prince Albert due to the correctional facility," he said. "They have a lot of individuals who are moving in and out of the system.

"When they go to leave the system, their first place is there in the community. So if they have family there, then they stay there and take what they learned from within a system and apply it to the streets."

Both provincial and national gangs have a presence in Prince Albert, along with other unassociated groups.

Even when individual gang members decide they want out, the process of leaving a gang -- like the process of joining -- can be a protracted one.

"For some people ... you have to move out of the community, but for others, those individuals that are part of the gang, their family might actually be the gang," Henry

said. "So how do you expect somebody to actually leave the gang if their family's part of that whole system?"

Some of the individuals in Henry's book turned to Christianity as a way of finding the values they needed to reconnect to their communities. Others did so by reclaiming their traditional culture.

From the author's perspective, an ideal solution would be to create meaningful relationships with individuals through programs tailor-made to their situations.

He noted the five steps of the anti-gang organization STR8 UP (which helped connect Henry with his interview subjects). They include writing one's autobiography, dropping their gang colours, learning how to be humble, learning honesty and working on their addictions.

Henry said that any programs to address gang membership should adopt multiple perspectives, such as housing, education, job training and other economic factors.

"We need to move away from the silo approach," he said. "There's a Hub in Prince Albert and everybody ... from a justice perspective keeps looking at the Hub as a way to try and help communities understand the issues that we're talking about. Why don't we apply this sort of issue to a smaller subset of the population?"

"If we actually decrease gangs and gang membership and the violence associated to it, we actually increase the overall health in the entire community because the psychological impacts of fear, about being fearful about certain things, begin to dissipate. So you actually increase the health of the entire community."

Aboriginal Affairs extends TRC mandate

[iPolitics](#)

November 14, 2013

Laura Beaulne-Stuebing



Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Andrew Vaughan

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate has been extended for one year, Aboriginal Affairs announced Thursday.

Instead of having to complete its work by June 30, 2014 as originally planned, the TRC has until June 30, 2015 to wrap up. Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said the extension will give the commission time to receive documents from Library and Archives Canada and write a final report.

"I am pleased to announce that the Government of Canada will work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, as well as the Ontario Superior Court to provide the Commission with a one-year extension to its operating period, until June 30, 2015, as requested by the Commission," Valcourt said in a statement.

Before Thursday's announcement, the TRC had suggested they might not be able to complete their mandate by the 2014 deadline. The commission, aboriginal groups, chiefs and opposition parties pressed the federal government to give the organization more time to do its work.

The relationship between the TRC and feds has been a rocky one; last year the commission took the federal government to court over its refusal to disclose government records. And in the spring, Auditor General Michael Ferguson criticized the lack of cooperation on both sides.

© 2013 iPolitics Inc.

NDP claims Saskatchewan government lagging in action on aboriginal report

[Regina Leader-Post](#)

November 14, 2013



New Democrat Trent Wotherspoon says the only idea the government has followed through on is driver education programs for students who go to schools on reserves. Photograph by: Don Healy, Regina Leader-Post files

REGINA — Saskatchewan says it's moving forward with recommendations to improve education and employment outcomes for aboriginal people, despite Opposition arguments that a task-force report is sitting on a shelf.

A joint government-aboriginal panel made 25 recommendations in April to help First Nations and Metis people get training and find jobs.

New Democrat Trent Wotherspoon says the only idea the government has followed through on is driver education programs for students who go to schools on reserves.

Wotherspoon says that's not enough to close the employment gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

Education Minister Don Morgan says some of the recommendations, like driver training and more money for adult basic education, could be acted on right away.

Morgan says other ideas are in the works, but it will take time because there are some challenges like geography and overlapping jurisdiction with Ottawa.

© Copyright (c) The Regina Leader-Post

What Harper's Legal Battle With Aboriginals Is Costing You

[Huffington Post](#)

November 14, 2013

Last year the Conservative government spent more fighting Indigenous people in the courts than it spent going after tax frauds. The latest [Public Accounts](#) show that the \$106 million that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development spent on litigation last year was more than any other department and almost double the \$66 million spent by the runner up, Canada Revenue Agency.

Unfortunately, this approach is what we have come to expect from this government. They wilfully ignore Aboriginal rights, daring Indigenous people to take them to court on a range of issues; from First Nations' child welfare to resource development, the government's response has been "see you in court."

Time and time again, the courts have sided with Aboriginal people. One would assume this would serve as a wakeup call for the government that their approach is just not working. Unfortunately it has not.

The impact of their misguided strategy goes far beyond costly and unnecessary legal bills for taxpayers. The government's tactics have fuelled conflict and mistrust in every aspect of Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people. Who knew in 2011, when a government document listed Indigenous peoples as "[adversaries](#)" in terms of resource development, that this attitude would permeate every aspect of the Conservative's approach when dealing with Aboriginal people?

This is not only morally reprehensible, but bad economic management. This failed strategy doesn't just impact social and economic development for Aboriginal communities, but has serious consequences for the Canadian economy. The Aboriginal population is the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada.

Further, almost every resource development activity currently operating or planned is within, or impacts, traditional Aboriginal lands, triggering a legal duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal rights. With the federal government projecting more than [600 major resource projects](#) yielding hundreds of billions of dollars from jobs, tax revenues, and spin-off industries over the next decade, courtrooms are not the appropriate venue to develop the needed partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

Litigation is the path to unnecessary delay, increased costs and a further erosion of trust. This is something that the [business community](#), the former Conservative minister of both Aboriginal Affairs and Environment [Jim Prentice](#) and the [Prime Minister's own envoy](#) on energy corridors in B.C. have all made perfectly clear.

The Conservative government needs to completely rethink its approach to dealing with Aboriginal Peoples, not only because of the need for social justice and respect for their Constitutionally protected rights, but because the failure to do so will have enormous negative impacts on the Canadian economy.

It is no secret that Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are confronted with shocking gaps in life outcomes in terms of education, health and other social indicators. The crisis in First Nations' water systems, overcrowding and chronic housing shortages, the ongoing epidemic of violence faced by Aboriginal women and many other issues all need urgent attention. If we are to find solutions to these issues, and unlock the huge economic potential in Aboriginal communities, we must replace this government's confrontational attitude with a true partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. This approach must be rooted in a spirit of genuine respect and cooperation. It is just wrong for policies, programmes and legislation impacting Aboriginal people in Canada to be unilaterally developed in Ottawa and imposed, top down.

Prime Minister Harper's decision to abandon consultation and negotiation to drag Aboriginal issues through the courts is failing, costly, time consuming and undermines the honour of the Crown.

First Nations Bank to open in Baker Lake by February: Kugluktuk and Pond Inlet slated for banking centres later in the year

[CBC News](#)

Nov 14, 2013 11:32 AM CT

First Nations Bank of Canada will open kiosks in Baker Lake, Pond Inlet and Kugluktuk next year, the bank announced this week.

Few Nunavut communities have banks, but as the territory grows, there's more of a need for banking services.

Baker Lake [has been asking for a bank for a long time.](#)

"We're open to any branch or any banking system," said mayor Joseph Aupaluktuq. "It will be a lot easier to get loans."



Keith Martell, chairman and chief executive officer with First Nations Bank, says the locations in Pond Inlet and Kugluktuk will be ready later in 2014.

First Nations Bank plans to open a community banking centre in the community in early February. A kiosk with a teller will be available in the Co-op store.

"From a customer's perspective, it will give them all the banking services they would get at frankly any bank in Canada," said Keith Martell, chairman and chief executive officer with First Nations Bank.

"They'll have full access to open an account, to deal with account transactions and to do deposit withdrawals."

The company plans to open a branch in Yellowknife in the new year. Martell says the locations in Pond Inlet and Kugluktuk will be ready later in 2014.

The bank has a total of seven full-service branches in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Manitoba, Yukon, Nunavut and Quebec. Its Iqaluit branch opened in June 2010.

First Nations student honoured with Governor General's award

[Simon Fraser University News](#)

November 14, 2013



Cherry Smiley pickets the Supreme Court of Canada during the Bedford case, which argued that Canada's prostitution laws are unconstitutional.

Cherry Smiley describes herself as a proud First Nations woman, radical feminist, prostitution abolitionist, activist and artist.

Now, she can add Governor-General's award-winner to the list.

A graduate student in the [School for the Contemporary Arts](#)' fine arts program, Smiley is one of five Canadians to receive a [2013 Governor General's Award in](#)

[Commemoration of the Person's Case](#). She is one of two youth recipients.

The awards celebrate the five women whose work led to the historic legal decision to have the word "person" declared to include both women and men. The award recognizes individuals who have shown similar courage and determination to significantly advance equality for women and girls in Canada.

Smiley is a frequent speaker on issues of violence against Aboriginal women and girls, prostitution, and equality for women and girls. She has spoken throughout Canada, in New York City and in Norway.

Over the past five years, Smiley has worked with Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter and volunteered with the Aboriginal Women's Action Network until 2011. In 2012 she co-facilitated the Sisterwork program at the Urban Native Youth Association to engage young Aboriginal women and girls in discussing violence, creating art and giving presentations to local communities.

Last year she co-founded Indigenous Women Against the Sex industry, a volunteer group working to educate the public about prostitution as an expression of colonialism and male violence. The group is also advocating for progressive social policies that will abolish prostitution.

"My activism and art aren't separate," says Smiley, who is primarily a photographer but also incorporates video, sound and text into her art projects.

The award, says Smiley, "is a recognition not only of my work but of other women, girls and organizations that are working for a similar goal—equality."

She's hopeful that the award will give a platform to further her causes.

'Minimal consultation' with First Nations on Ring of Fire: First Nations leader says new development corporation shows Ontario 'pretending' to consult

[CBC News](#)

Nov 14, 2013 4:02 PM ET



Northern Development and Mines Minister Michael Gravelle announced Nov.8 that northern Ontario's Ring of Fire project will be assisted by a newly created development corporation. (Jeff Walters/CBC)

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation says Ontario's latest announcement about the Ring of Fire shows the province is not properly consulting First Nations.

NAN Deputy Grand Chief Les Louttit calls the [province's proposed Ring of Fire development corporation](#) a "Father knows best" approach, adding he hasn't had any contact from the province about its plan.



NAN Deputy Grand Chief Les Louttit. (CBC)

"This is normal, a normal policy for this government," he said. "You pretend to consult and you do minimal consultation, then you defer that responsibility to the industry."

Northern Development Minister Michael Gravelle said the province sent letters to individual First Nations and mining companies "to determine who else wants to be part of this development corporation, who will be involved in the future development of the project from an infrastructure point of view."

"It became clear to us that we needed to find a way to break the log jam [surrounding Ring of Fire negotiations] and, when we moved forward with the announcement last week, it was based upon the fact that ... the potential partners in the development corporation would indicate their interest in becoming involved," he said.

Partners, not bystanders

Neskantaga First Nation Chief Peter Moonias confirmed he received a letter and is waiting to pass judgment on how useful the development corporation will be.

"We have to be at least partners in that, not just bystanders to the Province of Ontario and the companies," he said.

"The First Nations people are going to be the ones [who] are going to be impacted and we have to play a leading role to determine how this is going to be done."

Gravelle said the province is still holding talks with NAN on broader regional infrastructure needs, but welcomes NAN's input on the Ring of Fire specifically.



The Ring of Fire mining region is located in the James Bay Lowlands in northern Ontario.

For his part, Louttit said more work needs to be done on those broader needs, and added the north needs a northern Ontario regional development plan.

The Leader of the New Democratic Party is taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to developing infrastructure in the Ring of Fire.

Andrea Horwath met with Mayor Keith Hobbs Thursday morning in Thunder Bay.

She said she hopes the new development corporation will bring all the parties to the table.

"Years have been wasted. And that everybody understands the roles that they have to play and we haven't seen that yet," she said.

"Whether this development corporation somehow is able to overcome the mess that the government's made already, it's a wait and see."

Horwath says she hopes any infrastructure development can be used by people living in the north, and not just for the transportation of goods.